

## HOT Tips on Keeping Your Cooler COOL

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### 1. Start with a clean cooler

- Before you head out for an extended trip or an afternoon picnic, wash your cooler well with hot soap and water. If it's really dirty, clean it out with bleach.

### 2. Start with some solid ice

- Ice cubes tend to melt quickly and make a mess. Make your own ice blocks by freezing water in plastic milk jugs or use commercial gel packs or "blue ice" packs.

### 3. Start with frozen or very cold foods

- Pack foods and drinks directly from refrigerator and freezer to cooler. Freeze as many items (like fresh meat and juice boxes) as possible. They'll help keep other stuff cold.

### 4. Pack items in order of use

- Place items that you will need last at the bottom of the cooler; first things to be eaten at the top. The less that you move things around, the colder everything will stay.

### 5. Pack in portion-size, leak-proof containers

- Use containers that hold the amount of food that you will need at one time. Make sure that lids fit tightly, or put containers into zip-lock plastic bags.

### 6. Pack foods separately

- Cross-contamination between foods increases the risk of food-borne illnesses. Keep cooked and uncooked foods separate. Pack all meat products away from other foods.

### 7. Keep coolers in the trunk

- The goal is to keep all food and beverages away from heat and direct sun as much as possible. In vans or trucks, keep your cooler covered or under other luggage.

### 8. Keep coolers in the shade

- Once you arrive at your picnic spot or camping site, place the cooler away from the sun. Cover with a blanket or tarp if there is no natural shade available.

### 9. Keep coolers closed as much as possible

- Every time you open a cooler, the inside temperature warms up slightly. Close the lid completely after each use; place a heavy object on top if necessary.

### 10. Clean your cooler thoroughly

- When you get home (or when refilling on long trips), scrub the cooler thoroughly with hot soapy water and a dilute bleach solution (1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon water).

